The Ideology of Peace

Scholars have defined peace thus: "Peace is the absence of war." This definition is absolutely correct. Peace in fact means the absence of a situation of war or violence.

However, some people hold this definition of peace to be inadequate. They say that justice should accompany peace; that peace devoid of justice is no peace. People the world over are, therefore, acting intolerantly and indulging in acts of violence in the name of justice, saying, "Give us justice and peace will ensue." According to me, setting such a condition for the attainment of peace is impractical. This is because peace on its own does not bring justice. That is, justice is not necessarily an element of peace. When people indulge in acts of violence in the name of justice, peace can never prevail. This is because nothing productive can take place in an environment of violence. Peace is always desirable for its own sake. And everything else comes after, not along with peace.

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When people become tolerant and accept peace for the sake of peace, what that actually does is open up opportunities – it creates favourable conditions, which enable people to strive towards and attain their objectives. When people avail of the opportunities thus created, they eventually obtain justice and bring to fruition many other constructive initiatives.

The case of Japan is a concrete example of the success of this formula. Japan's industrial cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were destroyed by the atom bombs in 1945. After the holocaust, Japan abandoned violence and adopted a peaceful course for its development, which it termed as the 'reverse course'. And as a result, within a short span of forty years, Japan rose to become a great economic power of the world.

'Ignore the problems, avail of the opportunities.'

Therefore the success, which was not forthcoming, even after a long and violent struggle, was achieved by peaceful methods in a short period of time. Therefore, the only practicable formula for obtaining peace is, therefore:

'Ignore the problems, avail of the opportunities.'

This is the ideology of peace given in Islam as practised by Prophet Muhammad (may be peace upon him) that is exemplified by the Hudaibiyya treaty (*for details, read Muhammad: A Prophet for All Humanity*).

Peace Turns Minus into Plus

Peace is the product of a positive mental attitude, while violence is the result of negative thinking. Peace is the natural state of society: violence is an unnatural state. Peace is as much in accordance with nature's plan as violence is against it. When peaceful conditions prevail in a society, all activities take place in their proper form. But if the atmosphere of peace is disturbed, the normal functioning of society is disrupted. This law applies to man, as well as to the entire universe.

Violence closes the doors to positive activities, while peace opens the doors to them. It creates an atmosphere of positive living for the individual, society and the nation at large. All kinds of achievements are possible in an environment of peace. If violent situations hamper opportunities, peace helps favourable situations to flourish, where man's creative abilities can be nurtured and developed.

According to a German psychologist, Alfred Adler, a unique quality possessed by human beings is 'their power to turn a minus into a plus'. What enables man to perform this extraordinary feat? The only answer is that it is through peace. The human brain is a treasure house of unlimited power. If man loses his peace of mind at a time of crisis, he is not in a position to utilize his mental capacity in a positive way. Negative thinking is an obstacle to human development, while positive thinking is like a life-giver in that it stimulates human capacities. Therefore, when an individual or a nation is able to maintain peace in every situation, infinite possibilities open up. This is when minus can be turned into plus.

Nature: A Model of Peace

In the present world the root cause of most of our problems is traceable to our deviation from the peaceful model of nature—the best model for us to follow. All the dilemmas we are facing today arise because we have not followed nature's lead.

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The stars and planets are in continual motion in their orbits, but they never collide with one another. This serves to show man how to proceed to his destination in life without coming into conflict with others.
The sun too is an excellent model. It shows us how

we should give life to others in a totally undiscriminating way. The tree is also a shining example to man, in that it supplies healthy and beneficial oxygen in exchange for harmful gas, that is, carbon dioxide. And just observe how flowers spread their fragrance all around them, regardless of whether they are appreciated for it or not. A flowing stream is likewise a model when it irrigates the fields without expecting anything in return. Without the inculcation of these altruistic values among human beings, no meaningful life on earth is possible.

Peace is essential for a better way of living—peace of mind, peace in the family and peace in nature.

This beautiful world of nature created by God is well on its way to being ruined by man. Widespread violence, ecological disturbance and global warming have together become a menace greater than that of a Third World War. Indeed, it is as if a Third World War has already been thrust upon us. This is the biggest threat we are facing today. We have to work unitedly and sincerely to save nature in the interest of all of humanity. And this can only be achieved by following the peaceful method.

The Way to Attain Peace

Peace is essential for a better way of living—peace of mind, peace in the family and peace in nature.

One of the stark realities of life is that divergence of views does exist between man and man, and that it impinges at all levels. Some people hold that the removal of all differences is the sine qua non for bringing about unity. But, this view is untenable, as it is not practicable. You may not like the thorns that essentially accompany roses, but it is not possible for you to pluck out all the thorns and destroy them completely. For, if you pluck out one, another will grow in its place. Even if you run a bulldozer over all rosebushes, new plants will grow in their place that will bear roses ineluctably accompanied by thorns. In the present scheme of things, roses can be had only by tolerating the existence of thorns. Similarly, a peaceful society can be created only by creating and fostering the spirit of tolerance towards diversities.

However, a peaceful life can be achieved only when human beings learn what their limitations ought to be. According to the Divine law, you can take from the world whatever will satisfy your need—not your greed. You may do business with others, but you may not exploit them. You may also establish your individuality, but not at the cost of your family and society. You are free to use peaceful methods, but you are not entitled to use violence. How can we attain peace? The formula is very simple. Take your share without usurping that of others. Fulfill your needs without depriving others of theirs. In short, solve your own problems without creating problems for your fellow creatures. Peaceful co-existence is the only way of existence in this world.

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